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UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL <small>(Only for new nonprovisional applications under 37 C.F.R. § 1.53(b))</small>	Attorney Docket No. 1662-28600 (P99-2749)
	First Inventor or Application Identifier Adrian CRISAN
	Title Automatic System Configuration Management
	Express Mail Label No. EL705960627US

APPLICATION ELEMENTS <small>See MPEP chapter 600 concerning utility patent application contents.</small>	ADDRESS TO: Assistant Commissioner for Patents Box Patent Application Washington, DC 20231
1. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> * Fee Transmittal Form (e.g., PTO/SB/17) <small>(Submit an original and a duplicate for fee processing)</small> 2. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Specification [Total Pages 16] <small>(preferred arrangement set forth below)</small> - Descriptive title of the Invention (plus cover sheet) - Cross References to Related Applications - Statement Regarding Fed sponsored R & D - Reference to Microfiche Appendix - Background of the Invention - Brief Summary of the Invention - Brief Description of the Drawings (if filed) - Detailed Description - Claim(s) - Abstract of the Disclosure 3. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drawing(s) (35 U.S.C. 113) [Total Sheets 3] 4. Oath or Declaration [Total Pages 1] a. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newly executed (original or copy) b. <input type="checkbox"/> Copy from a prior application (37 C.F.R. § 1.63(d)) <small>(for continuation/divisional with Box 16 completed)</small> i. <input type="checkbox"/> <u>DELETION OF INVENTOR(S)</u> <small>Signed statement attached deleting inventor(s) named in the prior application, see 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.63(d)(2) and 1.33(b).</small>	5. <input type="checkbox"/> Microfiche Computer Program (Appendix) 6. Nucleotide and/or Amino Acid Sequence Submission (if applicable, all necessary) a. <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Readable Copy b. <input type="checkbox"/> Paper Copy (identical to computer copy) c. <input type="checkbox"/> Statement verifying identity of above copies ACCOMPANYING APPLICATION PARTS 7. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Assignment Papers (cover sheet & document(s)) 8. <input type="checkbox"/> 37 C.F.R. § 3.73(b) Statement (when there is an assignee) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Power of Attorney 9. <input type="checkbox"/> English Translation Document (if applicable) 10. <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement (IDS)/PTO-1449 <input type="checkbox"/> Copies of IDS Citations 11. <input type="checkbox"/> Preliminary Amendment 12. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Return Receipt Postcard (MPEP 503) <small>(Should be specifically itemized)</small> * Small Entity 13. <input type="checkbox"/> Statement(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Statement filed in prior application, Status still proper and desired (PTO/SB/09-12) 14. <input type="checkbox"/> Certified Copy of Priority Document(s) (if foreign priority is claimed) 15. <input type="checkbox"/> Other:

* NOTE FOR ITEMS 1 & 13: IN ORDER TO BE ENTITLED TO PAY SMALL ENTITY FEES, A SMALL ENTITY STATEMENT IS REQUIRED (37 C.F.R. § 1.27), EXCEPT IF ONE FILED IN A PRIOR APPLICATION IS RELIED UPON (37 C.F.R. § 1.28).

16. If a CONTINUING APPLICATION, check appropriate box, and supply the requisite information below and in a preliminary amendment

☐ Continuation ☐ Divisional ☐ Continuation-in-part (CIP) of prior application No. _____

Prior application information. Examiner _____ Group / Art Unit: _____

For CONTINUATION or DIVISIONAL APPS only: The entire disclosure of the prior application, from which an oath or declaration is supplied under Box 4b, is considered a part of the disclosure of the accompanying continuation or divisional application and is hereby incorporated by reference. The incorporation can only be relied upon when a portion has been inadvertently omitted from the submitted application parts.

17. CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS

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Signature	<i>Michael F. Heim</i>	Date	September 29, 2000

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for FY 2000**

Patent fees are subject to annual revision.
Small Entity payments must be supported by a small entity statement,
otherwise large entity fees must be paid. See Forms PTO/SB/09-12.
See 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.27 and 1.28.

Complete if Known

Application Number	NOT YET ASSIGNED
Filing Date	CONCURRENTLY HEREWITH
First Named Inventor	Adrian CRISAN
Examiner Name	UNKNOWN
Group / Art Unit	UNKOWN
Attorney Docket No.	1662-28600 (P99-2749)

TOTAL AMOUNT OF PAYMENT (\$) 802.00

METHOD OF PAYMENT (check one)

1. ☒ The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge indicated fees and credit any overpayments to:

Deposit Account Number 03-2630

Deposit Account Name Compaq Computer Corporation

- ☒ Charge Any Additional Fee Required
Under 37 CFR §§ 1.16 and 1.17

2. ☐ Payment Enclosed:

☐ Check ☐ Money Order ☐ Other

FEE CALCULATION**1. BASIC FILING FEE**

Large Entity Fee Code (\$)	Small Entity Fee Code (\$)	Fee Description	Fee Paid
101 690	201 345	Utility filing fee	690.00
106 310	206 155	Design filing fee	
107 480	207 240	Plant filing fee	
108 690	208 345	Reissue filing fee	
114 150	214 75	Provisional filing fee	

SUBTOTAL (1) (\$) 690.00

2. EXTRA CLAIM FEES

Total Claims	Extra Claims	Fee from below	Fee Paid
24	-20** = 4	18.00	72.00
Independent Claims	2	-3** = -0-	00.00
Multiple Dependent			00.00

**or number previously paid, if greater; For Reissues, see below

Large Entity Fee Code (\$)	Small Entity Fee Code (\$)	Fee Description
103 18	203 9	Claims in excess of 20
102 78	202 39	Independent claims in excess of 3
104 260	204 130	Multiple dependent claim, if not paid
109 78	209 39	** Reissue independent claims over original patent
110 18	210 9	** Reissue claims in excess of 20 and over original patent

SUBTOTAL (2) (\$) 72.00

FEE CALCULATION (continued)**3. ADDITIONAL FEES**

Large Entity Fee Code (\$)	Small Entity Fee Code (\$)	Fee Description	Fee Paid
105 130	205 65	Surcharge - late filing fee or oath	
127 50	227 25	Surcharge - late provisional filing fee or cover sheet.	
139 130	139 130	Non-English specification	
147 2,520	147 2,520	For filing a request for reexamination	
112 920*	112 920*	Requesting publication of SIR prior to Examiner action	
113 1,840*	113 1,840*	Requesting publication of SIR after Examiner action	
115 110	215 55	Extension for reply within first month	
116 380	216 190	Extension for reply within second month	
117 870	217 435	Extension for reply within third month	
118 1,360	218 680	Extension for reply within fourth month	
128 1,850	228 925	Extension for reply within fifth month	
119 300	219 150	Notice of Appeal	
120 300	220 150	Filing a brief in support of an appeal	
121 260	221 130	Request for oral hearing	
138 1,510	138 1,510	Petition to institute a public use proceeding	
140 110	240 55	Petition to revive - unavoidable	
141 1,210	241 605	Petition to revive - unintentional	
142 1,210	242 605	Utility issue fee (or reissue)	
143 430	243 215	Design issue fee	
144 580	244 290	Plant issue fee	
122 130	122 130	Petitions to the Commissioner	
123 50	123 50	Petitions related to provisional applications	
126 240	126 240	Submission of Information Disclosure Stmt	
581 40	581 40	Recording each patent assignment per property (times number of properties)	40.00
146 690	246 345	Filing a submission after final rejection (37 CFR § 1.129(a))	
149 690	249 345	For each additional invention to be examined (37 CFR § 1.129(b))	
Other fee (specify) _____			
Other fee (specify) _____			
SUBTOTAL (3) (\$) 40.00			

* Reduced by Basic Filing Fee Paid

SUBMITTED BY

Name (Print/Type)	Michael F. Heim	Registration No. (Attorney/Agent)	32,702	Telephone	(713) 238-8000
Signature	<i>Michael F. Heim</i>	Date	September 29, 2000		

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1662-28600
P99-2749

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
APPLICATION FOR UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

AUTOMATIC SYSTEM CONFIGURATION MANAGEMENT

By:

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AUTOMATIC SYSTEM CONFIGURATION MANAGEMENT

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

Not applicable.

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

Not applicable.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

The present invention generally relates to configuring a computer system with software to improve the performance of the computer. More particularly, the invention relates to a technique for automatically managing the configuration of a computer system.

Background of the Invention

One persistent area of concern for users of computers is operational defects in the computer system to improve the performance of the computer. Operational defects in the context of this disclosure include software “bugs” and different software applications that, although operationally sound by themselves, experience problems when run in concert with other software applications. Further, some software programs do not work well with certain hardware components (e.g., scanners, network interface cards). Such problems can cause a system to perform at less than an

optimal level and even “crash” in certain situations. Often, the source of the particular problems is not immediately apparent to the user.

There are several techniques for addressing such problems. For instance, by tracking such problems, improvements can be made to software applications that cause a problem. Thus, as a software supplier develops a new version of its software, not only may new and improved featured be added, but corrections for bugs previously detected can be implemented as well. Further, developers of computer suppliers, operating systems, and software applications can make software “patches” available to the public, such as through their websites. Users can download a patch to correct a problem. Sometimes, multiple patches must be downloaded to correct a multitude of problems.

At least some problems a particular computer system experiences can be resolved by loading a different version of certain software applications. Typically, most computers users attempt to determine their optimum software configuration for their system through trial and error by loading and testing different versions of software. As such, different versions of software are tried until the user happens upon a particular software configuration that makes the entire system seem to perform the best. Even then, the user’s computer still may not have the most optimal software load. Accordingly, it would be desirable to have a better way to make a computer system perform better.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The problems noted above are solved in large part by an automatic configuration system that automatically analyzes a user’s computer system configuration and recommends a more optimal configuration of components. The system determines the hardware and software

components currently contained in the user's computer including versions of hardware and software components. The system uses a knowledge base of previously identified problems to determine an overall problem index value for the user's particular configuration. Generally, the overall problem index value is indicative of the quantity and/or severity of the problems associated with the user's computer caused by the software and hardware components individually or in connection with one another. The automatic configuration system then varies the configuration (e.g., the versions of software) and determines a new overall problem index value for each variation. The system selects the configuration with the lowest overall problem index value, which generally will have the fewest and/or less severe problems and recommends that configuration to the user.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a detailed description of the preferred embodiments of the invention, reference will now be made to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 shows a block diagram of a computer system constructed in accordance with the preferred embodiment;

Figure 2 shows a configuration management module and a knowledge base used to automatically determine an optimal configuration for a given computer system;

Figure 3 shows more detail of the knowledge base of Figure 2; and

Figure 4 shows the actions performed by the configuration management module of Figure

2.

NOTATION AND NOMENCLATURE

Certain terms are used throughout the following description and claims to refer to particular system components. As one skilled in the art will appreciate, computer companies may refer to a component by different names. This document does not intend to distinguish between components that differ in name but not function. In the following discussion and in the claims, the terms “including” and “comprising” are used in an open-ended fashion, and thus should be interpreted to mean “including, but not limited to...”. Also, the term “couple” or “couples” is intended to mean either an indirect or direct electrical connection. Thus, if a first device couples to a second device, that connection may be through a direct electrical connection, or through an indirect electrical connection via other devices and connections.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Referring now to Figure 1, illustrates an exemplary architecture of a computer system 100. Although the system 100 can be implemented with many other architectures, the embodiment shown in Figure 1 is presented to aid in explaining the operation of a preferred embodiment of the invention. Computer system 100 includes a CPU 102 coupled to a bridge logic device 106 via a CPU bus 103. The bridge 106 also couples to a main memory array 104 by a memory bus 105, and may further couple to a graphics controller 108 and display 109 via an accelerated graphics port (“AGP”) 107. The bridge 106 couples CPU 102, memory 104, and graphics controller 108 to other peripheral devices in the system through a primary expansion bus (“BUS A”) which may be implemented as a peripheral component interconnect (“PCI”) bus or an extended industry standard architecture (“EISA”) bus or any other desired bus. Various components that comply with the

communications protocol and electrical requirements of BUS A may reside on this bus, such as an audio device 114 and a network interface card ("NIC") 118.

If other secondary expansion buses are provided in the computer system, as is typically the case, another bridge logic device 112 is used to couple the primary expansion bus, BUS A, to a secondary expansion bus ("BUS B"). Various components that comply with the bus protocol of BUS B may reside on this bus, such as hard disk controller 122 which couples to a hard drive 130, a basic input/output system read only memory ("BIOS ROM") 124, an I/O controller 126, and a scanner 140. BIOS ROM 124 stores the system BIOS firmware that is executed by CPU 102 during system initialization. The I/O controller 126 typically interfaces to input/output devices such as a keyboard 136, a mouse 132, a floppy disk drive 128, and various other input and output devices as desired.

Referring still to Figure 1, hard drive 130 is shown with various software applications 142, 144, 146, 148, and 150 loaded onto it. Such applications may include anything the user desires such as a word processing program, a spread sheet program, accounting software, graphics drivers, printer drivers, and the like. One or more of these software applications or drivers may be available in different versions from the suppliers. Further, each of the hardware components shown may be available from different suppliers and different versions of the component from the same supplier. For example, the scanner 140 may be available in 4 or 5 different models from one supplier and 3 different models from another supplier. Further, various companies may supply suitable versions of graphics controllers 108. As noted above, various problems may occur as a result of interactions between particular versions of hardware components or software applications. In this disclosure, unless otherwise indicated, the term "component" includes both hardware devices and software.

In accordance with the preferred embodiment of the invention, a user's computer system is analyzed and, if the system can be made better (*i.e.*, perform better, experience fewer or less severe problems), one or more software version changes are recommended. This process preferably occurs automatically, thereby making it easier and quicker for a user to improve the performance of the computer system.

Referring now to Figure 2, the preferred embodiment of the automatic configuration analysis and improvement mechanism includes a configuration management module 202 which interacts with a knowledge base 204. The configuration management module 202 generally analyzes a computer system's current configuration of hardware and software components 200 using the knowledge base 204 and recommends an improved configuration 206 to the user. The recommended configuration 206 may include such recommendations as different versions of the software the user already uses or new software altogether that the user should use. The recommended configuration generally will be one that will improve the performance of the computer system. Improved performance includes operating faster, experiencing fewer problems, and/or experiencing less severe problems such as system lock-ups and crashes.

Referring now to Figure 3, the knowledge base 204 includes knowledge of hardware and software problems that have been previously determined to exist. Such problems are commonly recorded by computer companies. Many of these problems are caused by software applications provided by various third party software companies. Each entry in the knowledge base 204 preferably pertains to a particular hardware or software component or interaction 208 between hardware and/or software components. For each such interaction 208, a problem index 210 is determined, computed, or otherwise assigned to the combination of components. In addition, a comment field 212 is included in which free hand text can be entered describing the problem.

In general, the problem index 210 is a relative measure of the problems associated with the particular components. The index preferably takes into account (1) the number of problems that result from the interaction and (2) the severity of each problem. An interaction of components that results in a large number of problems preferably would have a higher relative problem index 210 than an interaction of different components with fewer problems. Further, problems that cause the entire computer system to crash are generally recognized as the most severe types of problem, while problems that merely cause an error with the way data is formatted are generally considered less severe. All else being equal, a system with more severe component interactions than another system would have a higher problem index. Accordingly, the problem index takes into account both the quantity of problems and their severity.

One of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that there are many different ways to take these criteria into account and in assigning problem indices to hardware and software component interactions. For example, the index could be on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 indicating few and minor problems, if any, and 5 indicating many and/or severe problems. Further, there generally are various categories of interactions between two hardware or software components. For example, two software applications may have problems associated their graphical representations on the display, communications problems, etc. Each category could be assigned a problem index and then the individual problem indices could be summed together to formulate an overall problem index 210.

In accordance with the preferred embodiment of the invention, a problem index 210 is assigned for each interaction of components discussed above. It should be noted that problems can exist with individual software or hardware components that do not result from that component interacting with other components. Such a problem, *e.g.*, the scanner entry in Figure 3, would still

be entered into the knowledge base 204 and assigned a problem index 210. In Figure 3, for example, software A, version 1 ("SWA V.1") and software B, version 1 ("SWB V.1") have a problem index of 11 while the scanner by itself has a problem index of 25.

Referring now to Figures 3 and 4, the configuration management module 202 preferably performs method 202 which includes steps 252, 254, 256, and 258 (although step 252 may not be performed by the configuration management module). In 252, the configuration of the user's computer system 100 is determined. This step preferably is performed using any suitable software application known to those of ordinary skill in the art that can determine and report the complete configuration of a computer system. Most computers keep such information in a flash ROM (*e.g.*, ROM 124 in Figure 1) or a file on a hard disk drive. The configuration information preferably includes all of the various software applications 142-150 loaded onto the computer's hard drive 130, and hardware components such as NIC 118, scanner 140, audio 114, and other devices. For each such software or hardware component, a version indicator is also included if any such indicator is available. For example, a software application XYZ may be available from the vendor in two versions, version 1.0 and 2.0. The configuration information collected in step 252 includes such version information. The software configuration information preferably also includes the operating system and various device drivers used in the user's system. Further, hardware components may be available in various models. The scanner 140 may be available in various models from each potential supplier.

In step 254, the configuration management module 202 then uses the user's particular list of hardware and software components to determine an overall problem index value for that particular system. This can be done in any one of a variety of ways. For example, the configuration management module 202 may scan through the knowledge base and select problem

indices corresponding to hardware or software components or pairs of components that exist in the user's configuration and then add together the selected problem indices to determine the overall problem index.

In step 256, the configuration management module 202 determines whether a better (*i.e.*, more problem free) configuration is possible. The configuration management module 202 accomplishes this preferably by changing the version of the components in the user's configuration determined in step 252 and recalculating the problem index value and determining whether a configuration exists having a lower overall problem index value. In accordance with the preferred embodiment of the invention, the configuration management module 202 preferably does not vary the version of the hardware components because the user likely does not want to change the hardware. Further, the configuration management module 202 varies the configuration by keeping all of the software that the user's computer includes. The configuration management module 202 varies the versions of the software and recomputes the problem index for each such variation. For example, software application XYZ, version 1.0, may be changed to version 2.0 to determine if that change would result in a lower problem index.

There may be more than one configuration of components that have a lower overall problem index than the user's current configuration. The configuration having the lowest problem index, however, is preferable over the other configurations and thus, in step 258, the configuration management module 202 recommends the optimal configuration to the user. This recommendation may take any one of a variety of suitable forms. For example, the recommendation may be a list of instructions as to how the user should vary the software components in his or her computer to lower the problem index. The recommendation might also include downloading certain software programs and patches off a particular website. The user can

print out the recommendations and upgrade the computer at a later time. Alternatively, as noted above, some of the recommended upgrades may be simply downloading patches or new software versions off the Internet or ordering new software versions from a software vendors website. Accordingly, the user may be prompted to accept the recommendation and have the system begin the upgrade automatically and immediately. If the user selects the automatic upgrade feature, the configuration management module 202 will download the software in the recommendation and/or facilitate the user ordering new versions of software from the supplier's website.

The configuration management module 202 and knowledge base 204 can exist on any suitable computer system. In accordance with the preferred embodiment of the invention, the configuration management module 202 and knowledge base 204 preferably are accessible on a website on the Internet. As such, the knowledge base 204 can easily be maintained by an entity (e.g., computer manufacturer) that tracks problems reported by its customers and software and hardware vendors. Alternatively, the configuration management module 202 and knowledge base 204 may not be accessible directly by individual computer users. Instead, a user may run the software that determines and reports his or her configuration. That configuration information can be collected into a file which is sent (e.g., email) to the entity that maintains and operates the configuration management module 202 and knowledge base 204. That entity can determine a more optimal configuration for the user and send back to the user the recommendation.

As described above, the preferred embodiment of the invention permits a user's computer to be automatically evaluated and analyzed to determine if a more optimal set of software components is available. This alleviates the user from having to try different components until a configuration is found that seems to work better. The solution is faster and much easier on the user.

The above discussion is meant to be illustrative of the principles and various embodiments of the present invention. Numerous variations and modifications will become apparent to those skilled in the art once the above disclosure is fully appreciated. It is intended that the following claims be interpreted to embrace all such variations and modifications.

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CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 1 1. A method of improving the configuration of a computer system, comprising:
 - 2 (a) determining the current configuration of the computer system, said configuration
 - 3 including hardware and software component information, the information including version
 - 4 information;
 - 5 (b) determining an overall problem index value associated with the current
 - 6 configuration, said overall problem index value providing a relative indication of the problems in
 - 7 the computer system;
 - 8 (c) varying the configuration of the computer system; and
 - 9 (d) determining an overall problem index value for the configuration as varied in (c).
- 1 2. The method of claim 1 further including:
 - 2 (e) repeating (c) and (d) and selecting the configuration that has the lowest overall
 - 3 problem index value.
- 1 3. The method of claim 2 further including recommending that a user reconfigure the system
- 2 to match the configuration selected in (e).
- 1 4. The method of claim 3 wherein (c) includes varying the version of each software
- 2 application in the configuration determined in (a).

1 5. The method of claim 1 wherein (c) includes varying the version of each software
2 application in the configuration determined in (a).

1 6. The method of claim 5 wherein (c) does not include varying the version of the hardware
2 components.

1 7. The method of claim 1 wherein (b) and (d) includes selecting individual problem index
2 values from a knowledge base.

1 8. The method of claim 7 further including adding together said individual problem index
2 values to determine said overall problem index value for the configuration.

1 9. The method of claim 1 wherein said overall problem index value is an indication of the
2 number of problems associated with said configuration.

1 10. The method of claim 1 wherein said overall problem index value is an indication of the
2 severity of problems associated with said configuration.

1 11. The method of claim 1 wherein said overall problem index value is an indication of the
2 number of problems and the severity of the problems associated with said configuration.

1 12. A computer system, comprising:
2 a configuration management module;

3 a knowledge base that interacts with said configuration management module; and
4 said configuration management module determines a configuration for a computer user that
5 has fewer problems than the user's current configuration of hardware and software components.

1 13. The computer system of claim 12 wherein the configuration management module receives
2 the current configuration of the user's computer system, said current configuration includes
3 hardware and software components and versions of said hardware and software components,
4 determines an overall problem index value associated with the current configuration, said overall
5 problem index value providing a relative indication of the problems in the computer system, varies
6 the configuration of the computer system to produce a new configuration, and determines an
7 overall problem index value for the new configuration.

1 14. The computer system of claim 13 wherein said configuration management module selects
2 the configuration that has the lowest overall problem index value.

1 15. The computer system of claim 14 wherein said configuration management module
2 recommends that a user reconfigure the system to match the configuration selected as having the
3 lowest overall problem index value.

1 16. The computer system of claim 15 wherein said configuration management module varies
2 the version of each software application in the configuration.

1 17. The computer system of claim 13 wherein said configuration management module varies
2 the version of each software application in the configuration.

1 18. The computer system of claim 17 wherein said configuration management module varies
2 does not vary the version of the hardware components.

1 19. The computer system of claim 13 wherein (b) and (d) includes selecting individual problem
2 index values from a knowledge base.

1 20. The computer system of claim 19 further including adding together said individual problem
2 index values to determine said overall problem index value for the configuration.

1 21. The computer system of claim 13 wherein said overall problem index value is an indication
2 of the number of problems associated with said configuration.

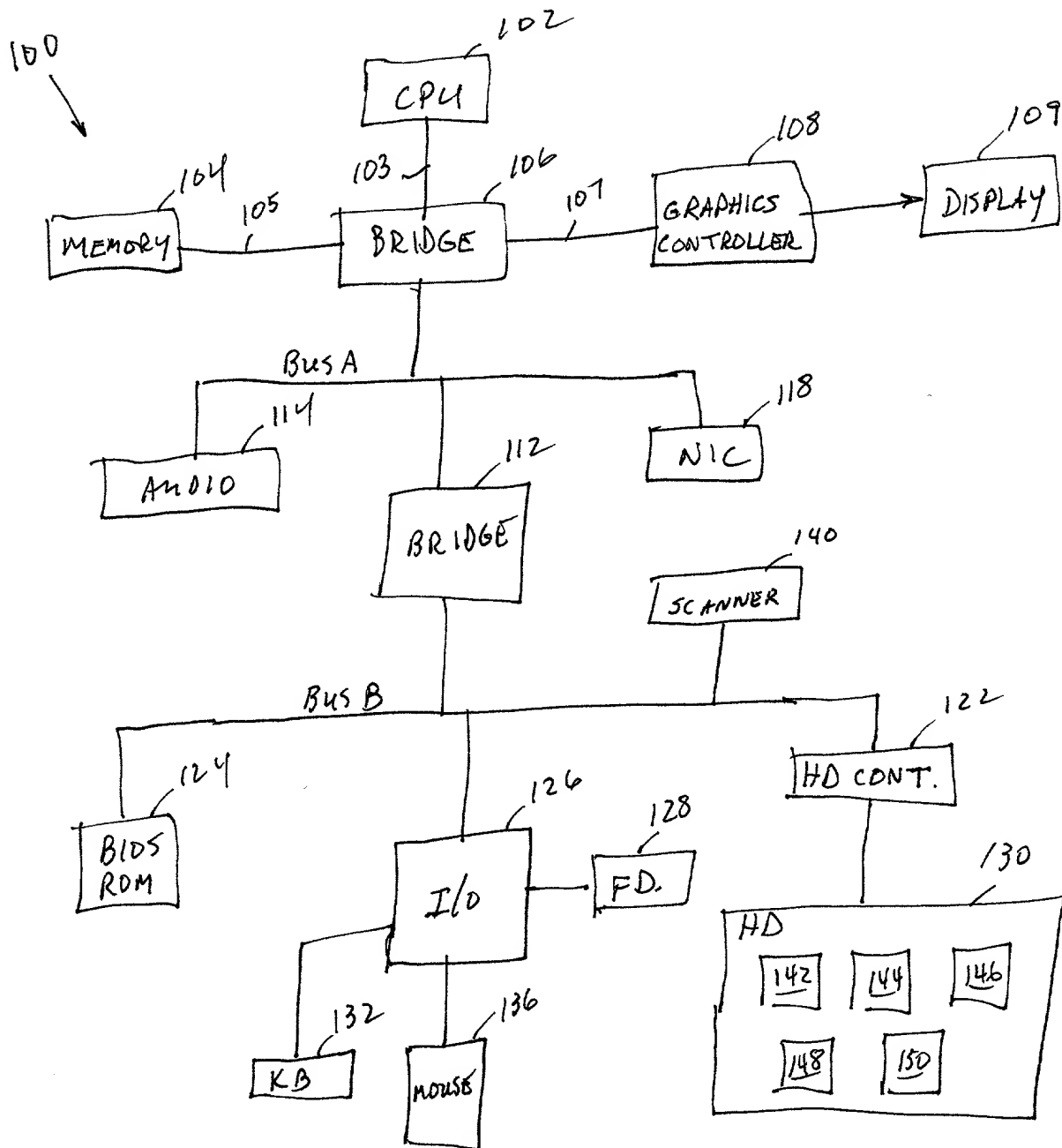
1 22. The computer system of claim 1 wherein said overall problem index value is an indication
2 of the severity of problems associated with said configuration.

1 23. The computer system of claim 1 wherein said overall problem index value is an indication
2 of the number of problems and the severity of the problems associated with said configuration.

1 24. The computer system of claim 12 wherein said knowledge base includes a collection of
2 problems that have been identified for various hardware or software components.

ABSTRACT

An automatic configuration system automatically analyzes a user's computer system configuration and recommends a more optimal configuration of components. The system determines the hardware and software components currently contained in the user's computer including versions of hardware and software components. The system uses a knowledge base of previously identified problems to determine an overall problem index value for the user's particular configuration. Generally, the overall problem index value is generally indicative of the quantity and/or severity of the problems associated with the user's computer. The automatic configuration system then varies the configuration (*e.g.*, the versions of software) and determines a new overall problem index value for each variation. The system selects the configuration with the lowest overall problem index value, which generally will have the fewest and/or less severe problems and recommends that configuration to the user.



F16.1

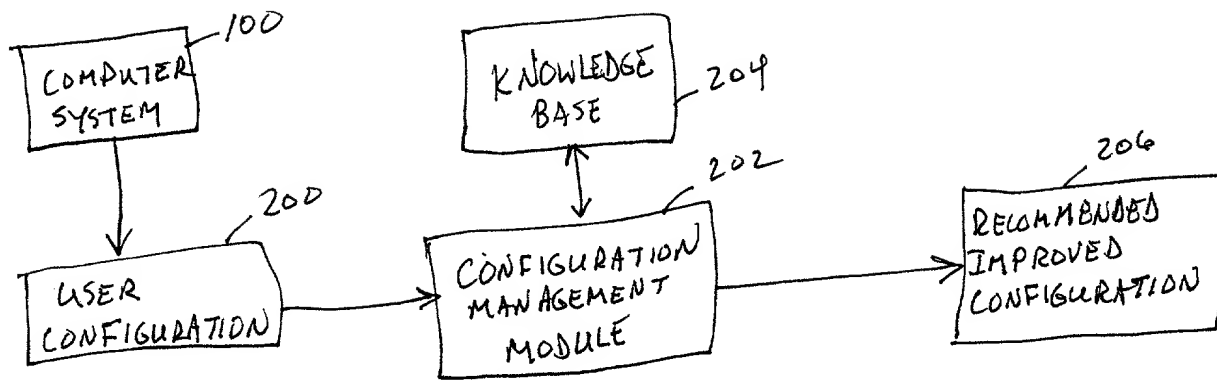


FIG. 2

204

INTERACTIONS	PROBLEM INDEX	COMMENTS
SWA V.1 / SWB V.1	11	
SWA V.2 / SWB V.1	8	
SWA V.2 / SWB V.2	12	
SCANNER	25	
SWB V.1 / SWC V.1	2	
⋮		

208

210

212

FIG. 3

250
↓

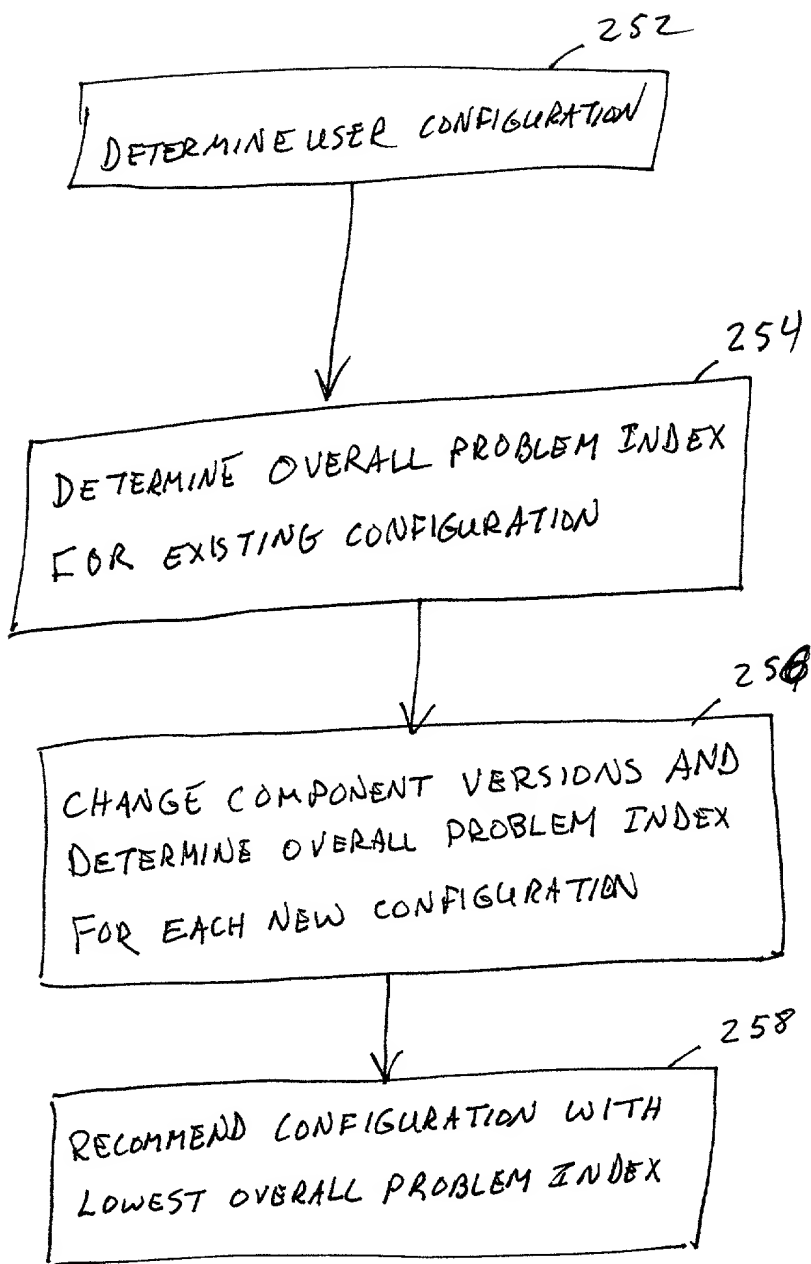


FIG. 4

DECLARATION

**SOLE/JOINT INVENTOR
ORIGINAL/SUBSTITUTE/CIP**

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that: my residence, post office address, and citizenship are as stated below next to my name. I believe I am the original, first, and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or a joint inventor (if plural inventors are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled: "**AUTOMATIC SYSTEM CONFIGURATION MANAGEMENT**", as described in the specification attached.

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above; that I do not know and do not believe the same was ever known or used in the United States of America before my or our invention thereof, or patented or described in any printed publication in any country before my or our invention thereof or more than one year prior to this application; that the invention has not been patented or made the subject of an inventor's certificate issued before the date of this application in any country foreign to the United States of America on an application filed by me or my legal representative or assigns more than twelve months prior to this application; and that I acknowledge the duty to disclose information of which I am aware which is material to the examination of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations § 1.56(a). Such information is material when it is not cumulative to information already of record or being made of record in the application, and

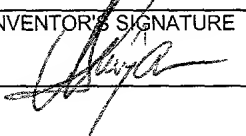
- (1) it establishes, by itself or in combination with other information, a prima facie case of unpatentability of a claim; or
- (2) it refutes, or is inconsistent with, a position the applicant has taken or may take in:
 - (i) opposing an argument of unpatentability relied on by the Office, or
 - (ii) asserting an argument of patentability.

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code § 119 of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificates listed below and have also identified below any foreign application(s) having a filing date before that of the application(s) on which priority is claimed:

COUNTRY	APPLICATION NUMBER	DATE OF FILING	PRIORITY CLAIMED UNDER 35 USC 119
			<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35 United States Code § 120 of any United States application(s) listed below and, insofar as any subject matter of any claim of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States Application, I acknowledge the duty to disclose material information as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations § 1.56(a) which occurred between the filing date of the prior application and the national PCT international filing date of this application:

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

FULL NAME OF SOLE OR FIRST INVENTOR	INVENTOR'S SIGNATURE	DATE
Adrian CRISAN		9/29/2000
RESIDENCE		CITIZENSHIP
13806 Quail Forest, Cypress, Texas, 77429		U.S.A.
POST OFFICE ADDRESS		
SAME AS ABOVE		

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant: Adrian CRISAN §
 Serial No.: Not Yet Assigned §
 Filed: Concurrently Herewith §
 For: Automatic System Configuration §
 Management §

POWER OF ATTORNEY BY ASSIGNEE

Under the provisions of 37 C.F.R. § 3.71, the undersigned assignee of record of the entire interest in the above-identified patent/patent application by virtue of an assignment recorded (check as applicable):

☒ Concurrently herewith
☐ Date Recorded
☐ Reel _____ Frame _____

elects to conduct the prosecution of the application/maintenance of the patent to the exclusion of the inventor(s). The undersigned hereby declares that she has reviewed the above-referenced assignment and hereby declares that, to the best of her knowledge, title is in the Assignee, and she is empowered to sign on behalf of the Assignee, and further declares that all statements made herein of her own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true. The assignee hereby revokes any previous powers of attorney and appoints the following to prosecute this application/maintain this patent and transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith:

Kevin L. Daffer	34,146	Irene Kosturakis	33,724
Michael F. Heim	32,702	Keith Lutsch	31,851
David A. Rose	26,223	Joseph Arrambide	39,589
Marcella D. Watkins	36,962	Sarah T. Harris	35,891
Bruce Noël Kivlin	33,929	Richard P. Lange	27,296
Jonathan M. Harris	44,144	Theodore S. Park	26,971
Mark E. Scott	43,100	Lou Brucculeri	38,834
Robert C. Kowert	39,255	Jeffrey C. Hood	35,198

Please direct all communications to: Conley, Rose & Tayon, P. O. Box 3267, Houston, Texas 77253-3267, Telephone No. (713) 238-8000, to the attention of: **JONATHAN M. HARRIS.**

ASSIGNEE**COMPAQ COMPUTER CORPORATION**Date: 29 Sept. 2000BY: Diane H. Strong

NAME: Diane H. Strong
 TITLE: Administrator, Patents

Authorized To Sign This Document On Behalf Of
 Compaq Computer Corporation
 Pursuant To Board Of Directors Resolution
 Date July 28, 1989